Implementation of Self-Directed Learning into English Courses
at Mae Fah Luang University

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Abstract

The study aimed to investigate the implementation of self- directed learning (SDL) into English courses at Mae Fah Luang University (MFU). The study focused on how SDL was implemented in the English course syllabus at MFU and what students' attitudes towards integration of SDL into course were. Data were collected from documents, course syllabi and course materials, and the participants; 2 course syllabus designers who designed Academic Reading and Writing (ARW) course and 153 students who undertook ARW course. The research was conducted by distributing questionnaire to 153 students, and then 15 out of 153 students were interviewed to gain more information about attitudes towards integration of self-directed into the course. The results revealed that there had been a development of implementation of SDL into the curriculum at MFU since it was established. The English Department responded to the policy of implementation of SDL from the executive

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administrator by integrating SDL into the courses by designing syllabi which incorporated self-study tasks. In addition, the students seemed to have positive attitudes towards integration of SDL into the course. They agreed to have SDL integrated into the course.

บทคัดย่อ

　　　　　　งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาการบูรณาการการเรียนรู้ด้วยตนเอง กับการสอนภาษาอังกฤษของมหาวิทยาลัยแม่ฟ้าหลวงโดยงานวิจัยนี้มุ่งเน้นศึกษา ว่ามหาวิทยาลัยแม่ฟ้าหลวงได้นำการเรียนรู้ด้วยตนเองไปบูรณาการกับวิชาภาษาอังกฤษอย่างไร รวมทั้งนักศึกษามีแนวคิดต่อการบูรณาการการเรียนรู้ด้วยตนเองใน ภาคปฏิบัติอย่างไรข้อมูลในการศึกษาปัญหางานวิจัยได้มากจากเอกสารประมวลรายวิชาและเอกสารประกอบการสอน และกลุ่มตัวอย่างของงานวิจัยนี้ คือ ผู้ออกแบบประมวลรายวิชา จำนวน 2 คน ที่ออกแบบวิชาการอ่านและการเขียนเชิงวิชาการ และนักศึกษาที่เรียนรายวิชาดังกล่าว จำนวน 153 คน งานวิจัยนี้เริ่มศึกษาจากการแจกแบบสอบถามแก่นักศึกษา 153 คน และทำการสัมภาษณ์กึ่งมีรูปแบบโดยเลือกนักศึกษาจำนวน 15 คน จากทั้งหมด 153 คน เพื่อศึกษาเกี่ยวกับมุมมองของนักศึกษา ที่มีต่อการเรียนรู้ด้วยตนเอง ผลการศึกษาพบว่า มหาวิทยาลัยแม่ฟ้าหลวงมีการพัฒนาการดำเนินการการเรียนรู้ด้วยตนเอง บูรณาการกับหลักสูตรนับตั้งแต่มหาวิทยาลัยได้มีการจัดตั้งขึ้น ทั้งนี้ภาควิชาภาษาอังกฤษได้ตอบสนองนโยบายโดยบูรณาการเรียนรู้ด้วยตนเองจากการออกแบบ แบบประมวลรายวิชาซึ่งระบุถึงงานการศึกษาด้วยตนเอง กอรปกับนักศึกษาอาจ จะมีแนวคิดที่ดีต่อการเรียนรู้ด้วยตนเองในชั้นเรียน นอกจากนี้นักศึกษายังเห็นด้วยที่จะมีการบูรณาการการเรียนรู้ด้วยตนเองในรายวิชาต่างๆ

คำสำคัญ: การเรียนรู้ด้วยตนเอง / การเรียนรู้แบบพึ่งตนเอง / แนวคิดของอาจารย์ และ
นักศึกษาต่อการเรียนรู้ด้วยตนเอง

Introduction

Thailand is one of the countries foreseeing the significance of the concept of self-directed learning that possibly improves its citizens to be autonomous learners who have responsibilities for their own knowledge and pursue their study as lifelong learning in the future. With this learning approach, we hope that we can develop the country and are able to compete the other countries around the globe to stand in the front row of the world. The reforming of the national educational system in 1999 under the National Education Act B.E. 2542 (1999) and amendments (Second National Education Act B.E. 2545 (2002, p.12) emphasises life- long learning by trying to promote self-directed learning for all institutions in Thailand. In response to the National Act and the government's policy, schools and higher educational institutions have tried to implement SDL into their curriculum. However, there was a common misconception about SDL integration into courses because Thailand was practising SDL on a national scale and the government incorporated it into curriculum by adoption of western teaching approach to local (Kirtikara, 1996). Local teaching method was viewed as inferior to the west. The problem was that it rarely integrated for local learners appropriately. It is to give the students a topic for presentation in front of the class without teacher directed the learning or learner training. The researcher was one of the students who had to find information related to the topic to present for peers. Many students understood only the topic they were responsible for, but the others were not. Thus, the

concept of SDL for the researcher is unclear to some extend whether it helps the learners to gain more knowledge without teacher's assistance or it leaves the learners more unknown ideas of the topics presented by peers. After that the researcher had opportunities to study and has worked with Mae Fah Luang University which has been trying to implement the SDL into its curriculum. There have been many interesting applications for SDL to be integrated to courses. Thus, the researcher selected MFU to be the place for conducting the research.

MFU is one of the institutions trying to implement the concept of SDL into English fundamental courses in order to support students to be autonomous when they graduate, and also to help students to survive in the university which uses English as the primary medium of instruction.

MFU was established in 1998 as an autonomous public university under the Royal Charter with support from the Royal Thai Government. The university has been developing its curricula and instruction to meet international standards, adopting English as the primary medium of instruction as its policy across the curriculum supporting the university's general focus on language learning (Charubusp, 2004), with regularly arranged activities to promote self-study.

Since 1999, there has been many attempts to implement the concept of SDL into English fundamental courses although the degree of integration of autonomy has varied depending on situations the university confronted. The integration included, for example, (1) using self-study as further exercises outside class, (2) partially using SDL focusing on doing exercises according to learners' needs and evaluating themselves for each task, and (3) using SDL

process which starts from needs analysis, goal setting, working, monitoring, adjusting, and evaluating tasks. These, however, do not seem to reach autonomy as expected by the university's policy because the students seem to depend on their teachers.

There is much research done in the field of SDL around the world such as self-access through a computer network (Nesi, 1995), incorporating self-access elements in a taught course (Pang, 1995), learner training for self-access learning: a Malaysian perspective (Lin, 1995), Teachers attitudes within a self-directed language learning scheme (Clemente, 2001), The role of the self- access centre in the tertiary language learning process (Morrison, 2008), and investigating the relationship between belief and action in self-directed language learning (Navarro and Thornton, 2011), etc.

Additionally, there is also some SDL research done in Thailand such as self-access learning at Chaiwanwittaya School (Reuchakul, 1995) which showed that learner training was provided gradually to familiarise the students with the idea of learner independence, a self-reliance instruction: a case study of Sammasigkha Pathom Asoke School (Riangrila and Thongthai, 2009) which resulted that the students possess the self-directed learner characteristics when they were instructed by using teacher- directed and learner-directed learning for normal and outside classroom.

Most of the research done above mostly focused only on facilities for self-directed learning, teachers or students; however, it rarely focused on the element of courses integrated by SDL about the attitudes of the learners when integration was launched. Since the course elements are the first information for the teachers to understand and find the application to teach or lead the class,

the prescriptive information of the course should include the keywords and idea indicating how to apply SDL to the class.

The significance of this study is that the university has adequate information to develop fundamental English courses and teaching support for both teachers and students to maximise the teachers' performance in SDL mode and the students' ability to learn by themselves. Next, the understanding of students' percep- tions towards self-directed learning will provide insights into how teachers should facilitate and manage learning in class 95 ability of developing autonomy. Furthermore, it is anticipated that the study will provide useful information for researchers who are interested in the autonomous learning or SDL area.

Purposes of the study

As this paper is a part of Master of Arts study, the data were collected in the academic year 2009. In this year, the aims of this research were to find out the answers to the research question:

(1) How was self-directed learning implemented in the English course syllabus at MFU?

(2) What were students' attitudes towards integration of self-directed learning into course?

Literature Review

Self-directed learning sometimes is defined differently. Hiemstra (1994) gives several aspects of SDL which include the following points:

"(a) individual learners can become empowered to take increasingly

more responsibility for various decisions associated with the learning endeavor; (b) self-direction is best viewed as a continuum or characteristic that exists to some degree in every person and learning situation; (c) self-direction does not necessarily mean all learning will take place in isolation from others; (d) self-directed learners appear able to transfer learning, in terms of both knowledge and study skill, from one situation to another; (e) self-directed study can involve various activities and resources, such as self-guided reading, participation in study groups, internships, electronic dialogues, and reflective writing activities; (f) effective roles for teachers in self-directed learning are possible, such as dialogue with learners, securing resources, evaluating outcomes, and promoting critical thinking; (g) some educational institutions are finding ways to support self-directed study through open- learning programs, individualized study options, non-traditional course offerings, and other innovative programs."

His explanation covers key aspects of SDL such as responsibility for various decisions for learning; self-direction as a characteristic that is present in learners and learning situations; learning possible without isolation from others; transfer of knowledge and study skills, involving various activities and resources; encompassing effective roles for teachers; and support of SDL through open-learning programmes. Therefore, the self-directed learner has to be responsible for control of his own learning (Dickinson, 1987).

There is an assumption that SDL may help in scaffolding learners to reach autonomy. Once they reach autonomy, they will possess some characteristics of autonomous learners. Dickinson (1993) identifies five characteristics of autonomous learners which are being:

a) aware of what is being taught;

b) able to formulate their learning objectives;

c) able to choose and employ appropriate learning strategies;

d) able to monitor their use of these strategies; and

e) able to monitor or assess their own learning.

In addition, Hughes (2003, p.4-5) summarises the "characteristics of autonomous learner" from literature related in the autonomous learning field:

"(a) self-awareness & reflection; (b) intrinsically motivated; (c) the ability to plan and manage own learning – being in control of learning environment; (d) institutional awareness – understanding requirements and procedures (knowing how 'the system' operates); (e) ability to formulate own questions; (f) possessing the research and information skills necessary to pursue a line of enquiry; (g) interdependence – the ability to work well with peers, and to recognise when appropriate support and guidance from tutors and peers will be helpful; h) critical thinking; [and] (i) discipline & subject awareness – knowing how knowledge has been and is created in your subject area."

To sum up, autonomous learners possess characteristics which are having an awareness of what and how to learn. They should monitor what they have been taught and done; and evaluate their own performance. They are also expected to be critical and reflective about their learning.

Implementation of self-directed learning into curriculum

To implement SDL, there are many concerns we have to take into consideration such as language curriculum, syllabus, and teaching methodology, materials. Gardner and Miller (1999) explain that the SDL mode

requires changes in the roles of teachers, learners, and the institution. Moreover, Dickinson (1987) mentions that implementation of the SDL mode comprises of (1) the materials the learners need, (2) how learners might be helped and supported in SDL mode, (3) physical resources and (4) ways in which both learners and teachers can be prepared for SDL. For the study, one important aspect taken from the above is institution involving syllabus.

Incorporating self-directed learning into syllabus

There has been consideration on incorporating SDL into syllabi in language learning since in the past the English language syllabus was the fixed syllabus. It did not leave room for learners for making any decisions in the learning process or "to be curious or experimental with the language at their own pace" (Barett, 1995, p. 84). Generally, the syllabus was heavily focused on fixed objectives, contents, medium of instructions, tasks and evaluations. Everything was prepared and decided beforehand by the teacher on what would be done when, for how long, where and how; in essence, the learner became dependent on his teacher (Lewis and Reinders, 2008). The above constraints lead to the need to be free for learners. For such reasons, there is an incorporation of SDL into syllabi for learners to have more room for learning by themselves. Therefore, there should be freedom of choice and help for learners to be responsible for their own learning provided by encouraging involvement of a learner decision-making process regarding the content and how to be taught collaboratively with a teacher (Nunan, 1988), encouraging working with others, and providing SDL (Lewis and Reinders, 2008). To encourage students to learn, there are many ways to do so such as integrating SDL into class, using task or project based learning, etc.

In addition, there has been research on SDL done in Thailand by Riangrila and Thongthai (2009). They studied SDL used in Sammasigkha Pathom Asoke School about the instruction. The study was a case study of nine months' duration by observation, interview, focus group and documentary analysis. Content analysis and inductive conclusion were used for analysing data. The results of this study were (1) instruction was provided in a classroom— teacher-directed leaching and SDL—and outdoors by task-based learning for practicing authentic learning; (2) students had the self-directed learner characteristics.

Under the aspect of incorporating learner autonomy into syllabi, there are other components to be concerned about i.e. learning materials, learning activities, assessment, etc. which will be discussed in the following section.

1) Learning materials

To incorporate learner autonomy in language syllabus, teachers can select books to be used in the classroom with teacher- direction or self-direction depending on the institution and teacher decision. Self-access materials need not be restricted to self-access centres, but can be used in the traditional classroom setting, co-existing with the class course book (Geddes and Sturtridge, 1982). The classroom course book is needed to be connected to SDL as well. The materials in SDL curriculum have the focus on assisting learners to do in class what they will need to be able to do outside relating to the real world. The materials should foster independent learning by raising the consciousness of the learners and making them more aware of the learning process (Nunan, 1988). The materials can be composed of learning strategies assisting them in learning both in cognitive and metacognitive levels in order to

raise their consciousness for the students' learning. In short, either materials are designed by teachers, or commercial publishers have to take into consideration inclusion of SDL aspects in the course book.

2) Learning activities

There are reasons to apply activities into classrooms which are based on "learner's needs" (Gardner and Miller, 1999, p. 136) where the learner "needs people to talk to, to listen to, to discuss, argue and exchange information with, to write to, to practise with, [and] to learn from" (Dickinson, 1987, p.107). Each activity has to be created with a clear purpose of activities and provide monitoring of activities (Dickinson, 1987). The way to select interesting activities for SDL is to consider that it is "individual", "pair", or "group" activities. The diverse range of learners means that there can be more advantages of such activities in that learners at "different levels can help each other", motivation of less proficient learners is "enhanced", learners are introduced to new learning areas, working in groups creates "a less threatening environment for experimenting with new activities", and "there are more opportunities to develop effective learning strategies" (Gardner and Miller, 1999, pp. 129-136).

In addition, Pang (1995) studied incorporating self-access elements in a taught course in Hong Kong, China. His purpose was to study about facilities of the transition from teacher-directed learning to SDL with ESP course for year one translation degree students at Hong Kong Lingnan College which incorporates a variety of self-access elements, including looking for grammar and language support units from books in the Self-Access Centre, using facilities at the SAC for viewing video and writing transcription, collecting and

analysing authentic materials from government agencies and enterprises, looking up CD-Rom database for references, etc. The result showed that the students were feeling much more confident and capable of learning language on their own. Worksheets from the courses, students work and feedback would be used to illustrate the approach taken and some of the benefits derived.

3) Assessment

Another component taken into consideration is assessment. Both the teacher and learners have to be involved in assessment in SDL. "Self-assessment by learners can be an important supple- ment to teacher assessment and … self-assessment provides one of the most effective means of developing both critical self- awareness of what it is to be a learner and skills in learning how to learn". Thus, "learners need to assess their own progress, and also need to be encouraged to evaluate, from their own perspec- tive, other elements within the curriculum including materials, activities and learning arrangements" (Nunan, 1988, pp. 116 – 134).

Attitudes

Attitude could be defined as "a consistent tendency to react in a particular way—often positively or negatively—toward any matter" (Adediwura and Tayo, 2007, p. 166). Learner's attitude is also considered as it has an impact on the level of second-language proficiency achieved by individual learners, and they are influenced by their success. Hence, the learners with positive attitudes, who experience success, will have these attitudes reinforced. Similarly, a learner's negative attitudes may be strengthened by the lack of success (Ellis, 1994).

Furthermore, there has been research on attitude towards SDL done in China by Shujun and Qian (2006). They studied English major students' attitudes towards SDL. The reason is that research on SDL with Chinese students has not been done in a local Chinese context on its applicability. The instrument was a questionnaire composing of 24 statements, concerning the students' attitudes and perception towards language learning, teachers' and learners' roles, and perception of their capability in language learning. The results indicate that students show positive attitudes towards SDL, student role, teacher role, and student-self-confidence. The students need to be involved in the language learning process and believe in the value of effort and self-discipline.

Research Methodology

Subjects

1) Course co-ordinators

The syllabus designer committee comprised of two female teachers who designed Academic Reading and Writing (ARW) course. One was a course co-ordinator who actually developed the syllabus for ARW. She designed and taught the course. She also had five-year teaching and two-year syllabus designing experience. The other was the English general course co-ordinator who gave advice on syllabus design due to her position in the quality assurance committee which clearly understood the policy on integration of SDL. She had three-year teaching and managing and two-year syllabus designing experience. Therefore, they were assigned to design syllabus of the selected course. There was no teacher training for either syllabus designer

about SDL and how to integrate it into the syllabus. They also understood self-study before designing the syllabus only from the credit hours stated in the course description written by the curricular designing committee. Thus, both designers were not involved in training for designing a syllabus, but they used their personal background on SDL from their education before working at this university.

2) Students

There were 153 students, first-, second- and third-year male and female students studying in various majors at Mae Fah Luang University, who participated in filling out the questionnaire. After the completion of the questionnaire, 15 students were selected to be interviewed.

Instruments

The research instruments used in this study were documents and semi-structured interviews. The justification for using each instrument will be elaborated on next.

1) Documents

In order to understand the context of learning in this study, the documentation used in the research were course syllabus, course book and supplementary material, university website, and university official letter. This is to find out the stated policy of the department on SDL integrated into courses.

● Course syllabi

Two groups of syllabi, (1) syllabi used during 1/2000 to 1/2009 and (2) syllabus in 2/2009, were used to analyse SDL keywords. The course syllabus which was used for the in-depth analysis was the one written for semester 2/2009. It is ARW course syllabus and it was used for analysing how implicitly

or explicitly the description of the course states or describes the SDL, and also for finding out how the course descriptions, study hours, self-study tasks, and evaluations prepared students to have more chance to be autonomous learners.

- Course material and supplementary material

The course material was commercial book, Hartmann (2007), "Quest 2: Reading and Writing (2007)". Supplementary materials were also provided. The course materials to be used for the analysis were used in semester 2/2009. They were used to analyse whether tasks, activities, and exercises inside the materials were served with SDL.

- University Website

The university website which was used for the analysis was publicised in the year 2009 on the 'about the university' page. It contained information about the university's policy for language teaching and learning.

- University Official Letter

The university official letter was one of the official documents distributed to the public for international students to study at MFU since the university began accepting international students in 2006. The letter was used for an analysis of the university's policy regarding teaching and learning to determine whether it was opened for SDL.

2) Questionnaire

The questionnaire was composed of two parts: general information about the course, and self-study task including students' attitudes towards integration of self-directed learning into the course. The questionnaire was distributed to 160 mixed-year and mixed gender students during the second

semester of the academic year 2009. There were 153 students who supplied complete information. They were used to obtain preliminary data for a follow-up interview for in-depth information and to investigate the students' attitudes towards integration of SDL into the course.

3) Semi-structured interviews

There were interviews for course syllabus designers and students. The semi-structured interview was used in order to find out information concerning insider perspective and to triangulate the data in this study. Two syllabus designers were interviewed about the purpose of integrating SDL into course syllabus, proportion of SDL to be integrated into the course, and the background of the two syllabus designers before designing the syllabus. The examples of semi-structured interview questions were:

(1) What is the rationale of integrating self-directed learning into the fundamental courses?

(2) What proportion of self-directed learning to be integrated into course? Why? How?

Fifteen students were interviewed about their attitudes towards integration of SDL into the course. The students were questioned to supply the answer: what is/are your reason(s) to agree and disagree for integration of self-directed learning into the course?

Data analysis

The data collected from the two instruments—documents and interview—were analysed which refer back to literature review, Hiemstra (1994), Dickinson (1993) and Hughes (2003). The researcher had developed the framework which would be used to analyse how the MFU implemented SDL

into the curriculum. To analyse, the research has drawn the keywords from the three sources above and classified them into three groups as shown below. This framework was used to analyse data from documents and interview.

Definitions: freedom of choice, decision making for learning process, transfer of knowledge and skills, various activities and resources, supports

Process of learning: needs analysis, goal setting including resource finding, strategy emphasizing, monitoring learning, evaluating learning process, learning process, learning strategies (metacognitive and cognitive strategies), scaffolding, pathways

Characteristics of autonomous learners: responsibility for own learning, self-awareness, institution awareness, intrinsic motivation, critical thinking, independence from teacher, interdependence

1) Data from documents

The data were analysed in order to allocate the evidence of the implementation of SDL to the above groups of keywords.

a) Course syllabus

The data were analysed in order to investigate the university's policy on implementation of SDL into the curriculum by finding how SDL was mentioned in course syllabus elements: course description, course objective, study hour and self-study, and course assessment.

b) Course materials

The data were analysed in order to examine the implementation of SDL into curriculum by finding whether the concept of SDL was embedded in the objectives and contents of the course books.

c) University website

The data were analysed in order to investigate the university's policy on integration of SDL into a learning context in MFU whether it was clearly stated for using English as a medium of instruction with SDL approaches as broadcast in the public announcement.

d) University official letter

The data were analysed in order to explore the university's policy on integration of SDL into the curriculum whether it was clearly stated for international students enrolling in MFU that they would be in the English environment and SDL context for English fundamental courses.

2) Data from questionnaire

The data were tallied and analysed in order to find out students' attitudes and reflection of the concept of self-directed learning implementation in fundamental courses. The data from section two were tallied into percentages.

3) Data from interviews

The data from course syllabus designers and students were recorded, transcribed and categorised into groups under the themes. The interviews were translated from Thai to English. Then, the data were interpreted to see if there were any significant ties to the data obtained from documents in order to investigate the implementation of SDL from a policy level. The interviews were undertaken to investigate rationales on integrating SDL into the course. The data from course syllabus designers were analysed and grouped into three parts: (1) purpose of integrating SDL into syllabus, (2) proportion of SDL to be integrated into the course, (3) and assessment of the course. Additionally, the

data from students were analysed an grouped into positive attitudes and negative attitudes towards SDL integration into the course.

Findings

Firstly, the finding on how self-directed learning was implemented in the English course syllabi at MFU is presented as follows:

1) Implementation of self-directed learning in English curricula (1999 - 2009)

The findings in this part show how MFU has implemented SDL into the curricula of fundamental English courses chronologically. The data were obtained from university's policy documents (syllabus, university website, and university official letter), teaching staff interviews, and course syllabi. The data are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1 Integration of self-directed learning into curriculum

Academic Year	Action	Task/Exercise
1999- 2000	- Integrating self-study exercises into curricula for English 1 and 2 working in English Lab	Doing exercises from Headway for 10%
2001- 2002	- Terminating integration because the English Laboratory was moved - Planning to set up the Self- Access Centre in a new place Semester 2/2002 - Setting up Individualized-Directed Learning unit-IDL at S1 building - Adjusting curricula	

Table 1 (continued)

Academic Year	Action	Task/Exercise
2003	- Implementing the process of Individualized-Directed Learning (IDL) into English Grammar courses (1 hour in IDL)	Practicing through portfolio gaining 25% of total marks
2004	Semester 1 - Adjusting Curriculum by adopting e-learning as self- study - Terminating integration of IDL into courses but using self- study exercises Semester 2 - Terminating self-study with e-learning - Moving IDL unit to 2nd floor, E1 building (reduced size of the centre) - Implementing IDL into English Preparation courses for first year students who failed English Foundation Semester 3 - Implementing IDL into English Composition 1 for first year students who passed English Preparation	Working on ELLIS programme (gain 10%) Practising in IDL unit (less proficiency) gaining 20% Practising in IDL (10%)
2005	- Adjusting curriculum from English Foundation (9 hours/ week) to Foundation of English 1 and Foundation of English 2 - Integrating IDL to Foundation of English 1 and 2 - Setting up IDL unit (New place at 1st floor, E1 building)	Practising in IDL (10 %) - Working on task - Monitoring - Evaluating (Teacher)

Table 1 (continued)

Academic Year	Action	Task/Exercise
2006	- Continuing integration of IDL into Foundation of English 1 and 2	Practising in IDL (FE1 20% & FE2 10%)
2007	Semester 1 - Terminating integrating IDL into courses since teachers' resistance due to work load, but opening for all walk-in users. Semester 2 - Planning to establish self-access language learning centre (SALLC) at C1 building	
2008	Semester 1 - Establishing self-access language learning centreat C1 building - Adjusting curriculum from Foundation of English 1 & 2 to Intensive English 1 and Intensive English 2 - Integrating self-directed learning into noncredit course: Intensive English 1 and 2 courses Semester 2 - Integrating self-study into first credit course: Academic Reading and Writing.	Doing self-study for 10% by dividing to 2 parts: doing exercises at SALLC and working on the in-house software covering each unit of main course book at computer centre Doing self-study for 10%: did SRA exercises at SALLC
2009	- Integrating self-directed learning into other two credit courses: English for Communication and College Writing.	Working on portfolio 5% and summary 5%

From Table 1, it can be seen that the university has tried to integrate SDL into curricula. The description above provides an overview of the

development chronologically. In the earlier stage, the curricula were integrated by using extra exercises for self-study (year 1999-2000), whereas in the later stage, the curricula were integrated by using SDL for self-study (year 2003-2006). The SDL processes started from planning, working, monitoring and evaluating tasks. The SDL which implemented varied depending on the focus of each courses. In the latest stage, the curricula were moved back to be integrated by using extra exercises complementing the normal classroom (year 2008-2009). However, the university's policy still emphasised the reasons for helping students to gain more chances to develop their ability in learning and using English as a medium of instruction. To study how SDL is implemented and integrated into fundamental English courses in detail, one course, ARW, was chosen as it was a credit course which all students had to take.

2) Integration of self-directed language learning into course syllabus

This section aims to present how the concept of SDL was integrated into course syllabus and course material. The analysis was done based on the framework of SDL stated in research methodology. The researcher has analysed descriptions and objectives, study hours, proportion of integrating SDL into courses, course assessments, and course.

a) Purpose of integrating self-directed learning into a course syllabus

Before the researcher analysed the course syllabus, the researcher interviewed two syllabus designers whose aim was to integrate SDL into the syllabus which would provide students time for studying by themselves as self-study outside the classroom. The two syllabus designers stated as follows:

"To provide students an extra period of time to practice as self-study outside the classroom"

Syllabus designer 1

"To encourage students to study outside the classroom; spend more time outside the classroom for learning English and also developing skills"

Syllabus designer 2

As seen from the quotations, both designers were con- cerned about SDL as outside class practice. To understand how the designers integrated SDL into courses, it is necessary to analyse the following aspects.

b) Course description and objective

Table 2 Course description and objectives

ARW
Course Description
Reading strategies; note-taking; expository writing; summary writing; and persuasive writing techniques
Course Objectives
After completing this course, students will be able to:
1. comprehend long passages from academic and authentic texts
2. take notes from reading in the form of graphic organizers
3. write a summary from reading
4. write an expository paragraph and a persuasive paragraph

Table 2 shows the main focuses of the ARW course. The ARW course focuses on basic reading and writing techniques such as note-taking, summarising, etc. The ARW course had an explicit statement of integration of SDL in the course description and objectives. Instead of indicating SDL in the course description and objective, the syllabus showed only study hours and self-study tasks in the courses as will be shown in the next part.

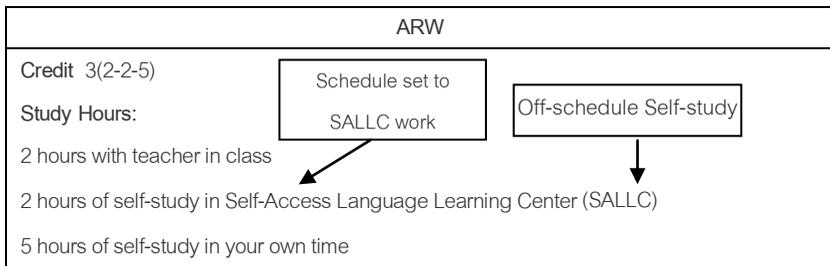c) Study hours and self-study tasks

Figure 1 Study hours and self-study tasks

It can be seen from Figure 1 that the ARW was a three-credit course which consisted of two hours for classroom study, two hours for self-study in SALLC, and five hours for self-study [3(2-2-5)].   In the parentheses, the first position (2) stood for lecture hours, the second number (2) stood for practice in lab or self-access centre, and the last number (5) stood for self-study in the students' own time. The last number was not counted as credit. Interestingly, the ARW provided for self-study in both the self-access centre and the students' free time. The ARW courses seemed to provide opportunity for the students to participate in SDL mode. In addition, it should be noted that The ARW course include details of the course requirements as shown in Figures 2 and 3.

Course Requirements

1. Study Hours: 2 hours with teacher in class

2 hours of self-study in Self Access Language Learning Center (SALLC)

5 hours of self-study in your own time

2 Hrs. in class: Minimum of 80% of your class attendance is required. Failure to meet this requirement will result in your ineligibility to take the final examination.

2 Hrs. in SALLC: You are required to carry on your learning outside classroom and in the Self Access Language and Learning Center (SALLC - Room C1 303) for 2 hours per week. Self-access learning in SALLC composes of two main compulsory parts.

A: Studying and doing exercises on reading materials called SRA provided in SALLC

B: Studying/doing exercises/using any learning materials of your own interest provided in SALLC in order to improve your English skills or attend the activities in SALLC

*** A minimum of 80% of your self-study assignment is also required. Failure to meet this requirement will result in your ineligibility to take the final examination.

After you finish your self-access learning task(s), record your learning in the Self-Access Learning Record and Reflection Form and submit it to your teacher.

5 Hrs. of Self Study: After your class, you will be given some reading and writing assignments to do in your own time. Make sure you finish your assignments in time. Procrastination will result in bad quality work and, most importantly, grade F if you fail to meet the dead line.

Figure 2 Course requirement of ARW in the syllabus

Figure 2 shows that the self-study tasks of ARW were separated into (a) reading supplementary practice (Supplementary Reading Activities: SRA) and (b) studying reading materials for students' own interest or attending activities such as conversation partner, grammar partner, writing clinic. Students had to read the topics they were interested in, and they had to complete the self-access learning record and reflection forms and submit to their teachers weekly for an evaluation. For the five-hour self-study, students

were assigned some reading or writing assignments to study in their free time. This type of work did not count toward the final grade but it was part of the paragraph writing assignments.

d) Proportion of self-directed learning integrated into course and course assessment

ARW	
1. An academic reading assignment	10%
2. An expository paragraph	10%
3. A summary paragraph	10%
4. A persuasive paragraph	10%
5. Self-Study	**10%** ← Self-study
6. Midterm Examination	20%
7. Final examination	30%
Total	100%

Figure 3   Proportion of self-directed learning to be integrated into course and course assessment

It can be seen from Figure 3 that the proportion of SDL in ARW was 10 per cent. Ten per cent of self-study for ARW was devoted to studying in SALLC only i.e. students working at SALLC two hours per week wrote the feedback on learning logs. Details of what students were expected to do were written explicitly in the course requirement (see Figure 2).

Moreover, the course syllabus designers also provided justifications for adjusting the proportion of self-study markings in ARW below.

The syllabus designer 1 mentioned that

"The proportions of course and study hours were set loosely by working team and departmental committee. Then, percentages of each were adjusted by course co-ordinator team for course's tasks and assignments. This course was worth 10 per cent of self-study integrated in and credit hours were set by university's academic board"

Syllabus designer interview1

From the interview, the proportion of the self-study for ARW was 10 per cent as it could be an incentive for students who spent enough time for their own learning. Working along the proportion of integration, the second syllabus designer also accepted the decision from the working team to adjust the course content details, assessment types and proportion according to the nature of the course and task.

The information from the course syllabus indicated that although the course descriptions did not explicitly state how SDL was integrated into the courses, the evidence on the study hours and the assessments were clearly shown in the self-study time and marking schemes for the course. One interesting finding showed that the proportion of the self-study hours (7 hours) seemed to be more than the class teaching hours (2 hours); however, the assessment score of self-study was relatively low for evaluating students' performance in the course taken. This point on contrastive aspect will be discussed in the discussion.

e) Course materials

The finding shows an analysis of the SDL integration into course

materials which is one step of promoting students to be autonomous. The data was analysed by using the groups of key- words presented in research methodology. The data were obtained from course materials and interviewing the course co-ordinator for the rationale of selecting materials. The course materials were divided into a course book and supplementary book. The course book was a commercial book and a course supplement was an in-house material. The rationale for course book selection was to find an appropriate book under the theme of reading and writing in an academic setting stated in course descriptions.

The main book used in this course was "Quest 2: Reading and Writing". The course book is theme-based—business, art, psychology, and health—and the themes are divided into several related topics. Each topic contains reading and writing skills for developing academic competency.

The components introduced in the course book were learning strategies and variety of the tasks. Strategies taught in this book were composed of reading strategies, writing strategies, critical thinking strategies, and test-taking strategies. Each strategy was presented in each unit. The students might become gradually familiar with learning strategies which would build up confidence in learning. Then, the students might possess some useful strategies for their future use. It seemed to be a good start for encouraging the students to be involved in the SDL mode. The task in the course book was flexible for working as an individual, a pair or a group.

Supplementary materials used in this course were in-house production materials arranged under the main course book presentation and covered course description. Each topic in the supplementary materials was

related to reading or writing strategies such as making inferences, guessing words by using pictures, using graphic organisers, etc. Another reading supplement was reading laboratory kits called SRA. Students had to select topics to study after reading supplementary reading books as practice from categories A-H depending on reading and writing techniques such as making inferences, getting the main idea, finding details, and drawing a conclusion. Then, students had to fill in a Learning Log and submit it to their teachers.

To conclude, the contents of the course book and the supplementary material focused on course description and course title. Some chapters of the book relevant to the course description were taught in the classroom. Also, the strategies presented in the ARW's course books seemed to be helpful for students to develop their own learning strategies and language proficiency as the first step of achievement in acquiring the strategies for active learners. Thus, the course book provided contents covered in the description with some useful strategies to tackle reading and writing in academic settings. The students were encouraged to be active learners in SDL. In addition to supplementing the main course book, the ARW supplementary material covered all topics stated in the syllabus.

Secondly, the finding on students' attitudes towards integration of SDL is presented as follows:

The finding in this part is to investigate students' attitudes towards integration of SDL in the course. The finding was obtained from the questionnaire on agreement and disagreement of students towards integration of SDL into courses and shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3 Students' attitudes towards integration of self-directed learning into the
course

	Agree	Disagree	Total
Percentage	88.2	11.8	100
No. of responses	135	18	153

Table 3 shows that 88.2 percent of students agreed with integration of SDL into the course. In addition, the finding was obtained from semi-structured interview for the rationale of agreement and disagreement of SDL integrated into the course. They supplied reasons to support it as follows:

The students seemed to have positive attitudes towards SDL integrated into the course that SDL provided freedom of learning and choices. They have their own self-responsibilities for their learning. The students stated that they could learn anything they needed which was not only learning the lesson of the course. The examples from audio scripts are shown below.

"We have freedom in thinking and we can find anything we are interested in to do."

Subject 28

"…because learning in this course, some questions or some topic, teachers can't answer. So, learning more by ourselves is needed."

Subject 262

In addition, they reported that self-study could prepare the students to study with the resources around them in order to develop their

English language. It might help the students to find new knowledge beyond normal classroom by themselves. The excerpt is provided as follows:

"it is to practise ourselves to learn English from sources around us."

Subject 265

On the other hand, 11.8 per cent of the students disagreed on integrating SDL into courses. Some students seemed to have a negative attitude towards SDL because they had no time to study by themselves. They also did not have self-responsibility. Thus, they could not see the advantage of doing self-study. The examples of the attitudes are excerpted below.

"there is no time to go to SALLC and the centre's hours are not enough. So, learning as self-study is making more troubles",

Subject 3

"Half of students don't gain any advantages or more knowledge. Some students copy their friends' work."

Subject 154

The above session has presented the students' attitudes towards integration of SDL into the courses, which suggests that there should be a closer examination of students' attitudes towards self-study in the semester 2/2009.

Discussion

To answer the first RQ on how SDL was implemented in the course syllabus, it can be summarised that MFU has accomplished for integrating self-

study task which was regarded as a part of the requirement of the course. The self-study tasks varied greatly from extra exercises to self-directed learning. However, the design of syllabi was different depending on the academic years and semesters when the syllabi were launched. Along the way of syllabus design, there were many course syllabus designers assigned to adjust and change some elements of the syllabi to be appropriate for the students under the university's policy. At 2009, MFU integrated SDL to the course as only extra exercise which could be done in the SAC and write the feedback after they completed the task. Comparing to Pang (1995), he tried to integrate all activities concerning to SDL for students to learn language depending on their own interest with the process of monitoring their learning by filling questionnaire in order to notice the progress of their learning before the end of the course comes. Both writing the feedback and filling the questionnaire to monitor the students' learning is a way of learning in SDL mode which can raise the students' awareness to a conscious level of learning on their own.

Responding to the second RQ on what students' attitudes towards SDL are, the result shows that the students tried to do self-study with more positive attitude and agreed on integration of self-directed learning into the course since it could encourage their motivation in learning, build their confidence, provide freedom and independence from the teacher, and help them take a greater responsibility for their learning, etc. Similarly, the finding of Reuchakul (1995) shows that the students have better attitudes toward learning English by incorporating SDL into the course and they are proud of themselves when they achieve the task requirement. It might be the sign for a good start of being self-directed learner. When the students have a good attitude, they will

be able to transfer their role from passive to active learner (see the challenge 3, learner training)

However, there are some challenges for MFU to consider ways to improve or sustain SDL for courses.

1) MFU's executive administrator should try to maintain the concept of self-directed learning in the university.

According to the university's policy on SDL in findings, it was a good beginning to emphasise integration of SDL into syllabi. However, another important point to be considered is how to maintain the concept of SDL in teaching and learning at MFU because there were some periods when SDL was reduced and even terminated from English courses as shown in findings 1) between the academic year 2006 and 2007. The university's staff could not see the advantages of having SDL incorporated into a course syllabus because it was very difficult to have a concrete outcome in a short period of time and also required a lot of hard work and effort for the beginning steps. Therefore, there should be training for the teachers which can guide and scaffold them bit by bit or semester by semester until they see the success of implementing SDL. Above all, the university needs to have a solid policy and monitor progress closely so that they can learn from problems that may occur. To sustain the concept of integrating SDL into the curriculum, Gardner and Miller (1999) recommend that institutional attitudes can influence the introduction of SDL to learners and, if it is a highly structured institution, introduction to SDL needs to become a policy. It may help all staff in the institution to remind themselves about SDL.

As Rodgers' and Richards' (1987, p.29) questions for an executive administrator need to be answered before launching SDL, the policy made by administrative agents needs to be stated and made public in order to inform all involved staff and learners as well. If it is done publicly, it may lead to action on implementation of SDL since the institution allows doing so and supports funding it if needed. Therefore, teachers may be willing to participate in this mode of learning.

Furthermore, Colman (1987) advises on continuity and organisational issues that the problems of continuity within and between centres and programmes come down to several primary organisational issues. These relate to timing of subsequent courses, transfer of information between teachers within or across centres, and offering of complementary learning programmes to learners. Considering the continuity of SDL which is integrated into courses, the institution should consider timing for learning. If it is too short, they may not reach to a point where self-directed and autonomous learning is possible.

At the policy deliberation level, there should be consid- eration in the level of syllabus design as well. The discussion on syllabus challenges will be presented in the following part.

2) Second, there should be more self-directed learning involved in course syllabi including course description and objectives, materials, and assessment.

Referring to the course syllabus analysis, there are three main elements resulting as challenges to implementation of SDL into courses which are course description, materials, and course assessment. They will be discussed in the following section.

a) Designing a clear course description

According to the finding in an analysis of course syllabus design, there were no keywords of SDL stated anywhere in the course description of either course. The ARW course focused on basic reading and writing techniques such as note-taking, summarising, etc. Thus, we can claim that the concept of SDL was not obviously manifested in the course descriptions. There were no objectives stated explicitly about SDL in the course syllabus. So, the teachers and the learners might not know what was expected from them. The course description stated only the skills that the students had to practice with a very short description.

Awareness should be raised about course direction and requirement; in other words, there should be some explicit phrases or sentences on SDL in a course description and objective in order to help teachers and learners be aware of the course expectation and output. Nunan (1988, p.61) proposes the rationale of specifying that course objectives can

"play an important part in the process of sensitising learners to what it is to be a language learner. By making explicit course objectives, the following benefits can accrue: Learners come to have a more realistic idea of what can be achieved in a given course. Learning comes to be seen as the gradual accretion of achievable goals. Students develop greater sensitivity to their role as language learners and their rather vague notions of what is to be a learner become much sharper. Self-evaluation becomes more feasible. Classroom activities can be seen to relate to learner's real-life needs. The development of skills can be seen as a gradual rather than an all-or-nothing process."

If course descriptions and objectives are clear, it may result in the greater outcome which the department expects from teachers and students.

b) Material preparation

The finding in an analysis of the course syllabus design reveals that the department used the commercial book to teach the students and provided the supplementary material to cater for them in terms of extra practice and self-study tasks. The book for ARW was relevant to the course description and intended to be taught only in the classroom. The strategies also presented in both ARW's course book seemed to be helpful for students to develop the students' learning strategies and language proficiency. In the self-access centre, some of the materials such as SRA were also selected for the students to practice by themselves. However, from the researcher's view, the self-study materials are still insufficient and inappropriate. Dickinson (1987) also points out that using commercially available materials is a big advantage for convenience and variety, but it does not offer a complete solution for SDL. Thus, there should be more varied, interesting choices for students to meet their needs. The supplementary materials may help novice teachers to tie-in some learning strategies concerning the content taught in the classroom when the students, in the teacher's expectation, need the materials to facilitate learning the main content easier. Additionally, each course should provide a clear teacher's manual to guide them on the teaching processes of how to teach and integrate SDL in the classroom effectively.

c) Course assessment

Although there was a proportion of self-study in marking schemes provided, the weight of the score for SDL was somehow quite insufficient for the

students to notice its importance (See Figure 3). Thus, if we see from the course requirement, it may suggest that SDL may not be strongly emphasised for developing the students' ability to take control over their own learning. However, the weight of the scores of self-study tasks was not that high because the department might be aware of the subjectivity of a teacher's marking. It is a challenge for us to find a smart way to mark and set the proper criteria to assess the students' progress on self-study.

To have a valid assessment, each process should be scrutinised according to clear criteria of assessment. The assessment of self-study may be set by using rubrics to help validate what should be tested under the objectives of a course which may include the content and the process of doing self-study. The marks for each single part of an assessment's rubrics should be stated explicitly. For example, if the students can show what they have learnt according to the goal setting to a satisfactory degree, the score for contents learnt must be given in full. Additionally, how they evaluate the task should break down to several points such as whether they can show the discovery or realisation of the students' own problems, strengths, and weaknesses. When they know it, how would they overcome the problems or weaknesses?

In addition, Nunan (1988) proposed questions for assessment for a learner-centred curriculum whether assessment procedures were appropriate to prespecified objectives, and opportunities for learners to have self-assessment were introduced or not. The self-assessment may be one of the assessment tools to help teachers get students' involvement in overall evaluation of students' performance.

3) Third, learner training should be provided for students to see

significance of learning independently.

It is essential to develop students, who have a negative attitude and/or students with a positive attitude who have a basic awareness of language learning and the need to gain more confidence, to become more autonomous learners; the preparation of learners should be taken care of, especially for awareness preparation even though some of them already possess awareness of control over their learning. In the stages of preparation, Scharle and Szabó (2000, p. 9) propose a process of developing learner responsibility in psychological preparation as raising awareness; then, beginning changing attitudes; and later on, transferring roles to the learner.

Recommendations for further research

The results have provided further evidence confirming that SDL is a useful tool for students to be able to take charge of their learning. However, there are three recommendations for further research relating to this field is that conducting a comparative study by comparing MFU with other universities in order to find out whether SDL with Thai students will result in similar findings. One possible reason for conducting a comparative study is that MFU is a university established decades ago. However, the teachers are new to teaching. Thus, the challenges may be different from the others. In addition, another reason is that MFU is a university using English only as a medium of instruction, therefore, the students will be familiar with an English learning environment and get used to it. When a comparison is made with other universities that use Thai as the medium of instruction, there may be some interesting findings to be shared and discussed in order to help improve language learning in Thailand.

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